



# CALIFORNIA

## COMPREHENSIVE TOBACCO CONTROL

### PUBLIC HEALTH PROBLEM

Data from the California Youth Tobacco Survey indicate that the prevalence of smoking during the past 30 days among 12- to 17-year-olds in California increased from approximately 9% in the early 1990s to nearly 12% in 1995. Of the 8,793,616 young people aged 17 and younger in California, more than 450,000 would die prematurely from a tobacco-related disease if these tobacco-use patterns persisted.

### EVIDENCE THAT PREVENTION WORKS

Funding local programs has been shown to produce measurable progress toward meeting statewide tobacco control objectives, including declines in per capita cigarette consumption, in rates of exposure to secondhand smoke, and in the percentage of successful attempts by young people to buy cigarettes.

### PROGRAM EXAMPLE

Established by a 1988 ballot initiative, the CDC-supported California Tobacco Control Program is one of the longest-running programs in the country and serves as a model for other such programs. By law, one-third of the program's funds supports school-based activities to prevent tobacco use and the other two-thirds supports a comprehensive health education effort. As part of this effort, the program funds 61 local health departments, four ethnic networks, 11 regional community linkage projects, 90 community-based organizations, a statewide media campaign, and other statewide support systems. Since the program was established, California has made significant progress in several tobacco-related measures, including the following:

- The overall prevalence of tobacco use in California has declined at nearly twice the rate of that in the United States.
- Rates of smoking among young people declined by 43% from 1995 to 1999.
- Sixty-four percent of all homes enforce a voluntary smoking ban, and 87% of all children are protected from secondhand smoke in their homes.

The California program is the first in the country to demonstrate long-term health-related changes, including declines in lung cancer and heart disease rates.

### IMPLICATIONS

The declines in lung cancer and heart disease rates in California are striking examples of what a tobacco control program can accomplish when it is supported by adequate resources and sustained over time.